



# National Army Volunteer Centers March Forward in Recruiting

Story and photos by U.S. Army  
Capt. Cenethea R. Harraway  
OMC-A Public Affairs Office

**KABUL, Afghanistan**—Although recruiting for the Afghan National Army started only 17 months ago, Afghanistan is moving steadily toward its goal of enlisting 70,000 volunteers.

With the cooperation of the Afghan government, the ANA Recruiting Command, the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan and, importantly, village elders and mullahs from the country's provinces, the ANA has already trained and equipped a professional force of more than 24,000 soldiers, with almost 6,000 more currently in training.

National Army Volunteer Centers throughout Afghanistan are producing more than 2,400 recruits every month. NAVCs are designed to promote awareness and understanding of the ANA throughout Afghanistan, resulting in a strong national army that is representative of all the Afghan people.

There are 31 operational NAVCs, with four more under construction. One will be located in each of the country's 34 provinces, with two in the capital city of Kabul.

Managing these NAVCs is the

responsibility of regional ANA recruiting battalions that monitor the monthly mission requirements of their respective NAVCs and contract nearly 850 new recruits every ten days. Four of the seven planned battalion headquarters are already operational.

Through the doors of the NAVCs, Afghan civilians take their first steps to becoming ANA soldiers. The word is spreading throughout the provinces as more Afghans learn they share a common capability to make Afghanistan a stronger and more secure nation by volunteering.

"I am now 18 years old and will return here to the NAVC upon high school graduation to join the ANA and support our country," said a Logar vil-



**New recruits complete administrative processing at the Kabul Military Entrance Processing Station.**

lage teenager, echoing the sentiments of many young men in his province.

While it may seem unlikely that

a country ravaged by decades of war could be capable of maintaining modern standards in its recruit-

ing operations, much of the day-to-day activities in an Afghan Army NAVC mirror those of U.S. recruiting stations, from basic mission requirements to recruiting techniques.

With the help of the NAVCs, ANA recruiting is able to extend its reach and enable young men of every ethnic tribe to join. "NAVCs reach out to the young men of Afghanistan, to help them join a new army made up of all the major ethnic groups of Afghanistan—Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Hazara, Turkman and more," said U.S. Air Force Maj.

**"With the strong will and unwavering commitment of the people, the Afghan National Army will continue its growth toward 70,000 volunteers."**

--Col. Aqa Mohammad Daqiq  
Logar Province NAVC Commander



**Soldiers from the 36th Kandak (battalion) celebrate after graduating from the Kabul Military Training Center as they shout in Dari, "I serve the people of Afghanistan." The Afghan National Army has a force of more than 24,000 soldiers.**

Gen. John Brennan, chief of OMC-A.

NAVC recruiting officers conduct initial interviews with potential recruits and outline the benefits of joining the ANA. Using multimedia videos and recruiting handouts to help get their point across, they discuss such benefits as serving their country, learning valuable job skills, monthly salary, education, health care, lodging and daily meals.

Recruiters also devote a lot of time to gaining the acceptance and support of village elders. To maintain this support, recruits receive documentation at the completion of their interview that must be signed by three influential village elders who formally grant their consent for the recruit to join the ANA.

Indicative of the national army's recruiting success is their Delayed Entry Program, used to account for some of the newly contracted re-

cruits waiting to be transferred to basic training at the Kabul Military Training Center. When enrolled in the DEP program, recruits receive a certificate affirming their contractual obligation to join the ANA.

"The DEP is working well. I want to minimize the time it takes for transportation to KMTC to keep the recruits for the future," said Lt. Col. Ghulam Sarwar, the Recruiting Command logistics officer.

On their way to basic training at KMTC, recruits are processed through the Military Entrance Processing Station, located in Kabul, for initial screening.

While the station is not currently in the best condition, the mission continues until a planned, new facility is built.

"I look forward to the completion of our new MEPS facility because it will greatly improve our efficiency and timeliness in processing re-

cruits," said Col. Jan Aqa, MEPS commander. "It will be the first glimpse of Army life for new recruits."

With a staff of 23, the MEPS facility processes every ANA recruit, normally in 10 to 15 days, through three areas: administration, medical and military skills instruction.

Administrative processing involves verifying contracts for accuracy, initiating paperwork for Afghan identification cards and literacy testing to determine whether a recruit goes directly to basic training or is selected to attend noncommissioned officer training.


Medical screening assesses the recruit's fitness and health. If a recruit is found to be unfit for duty, he will return to his home with the thanks of his nation for having volunteered to serve his country.

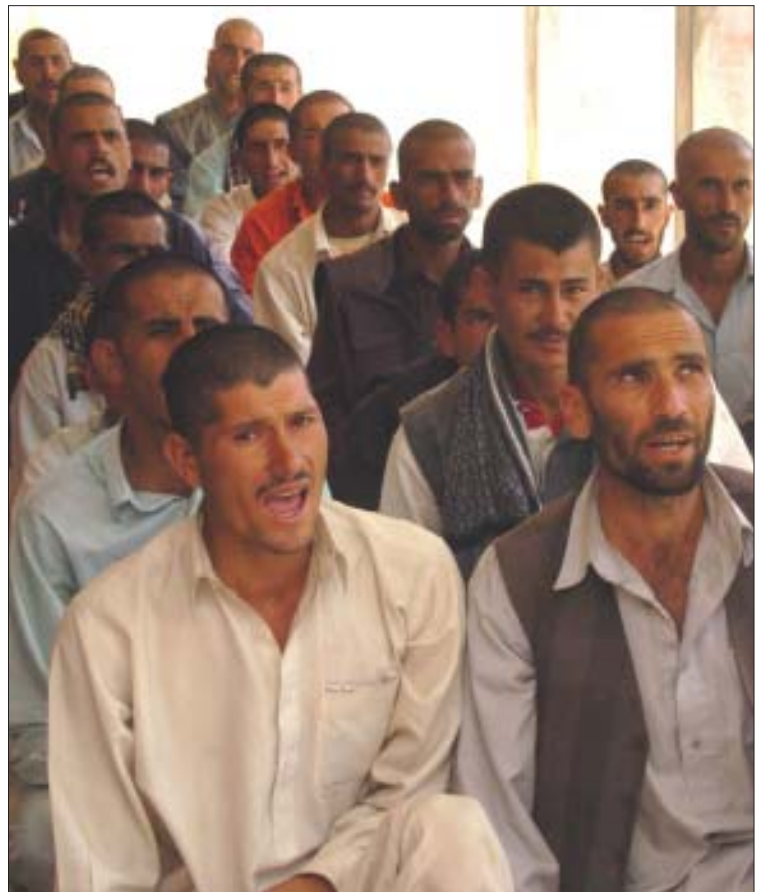
Military skills instruction is conducted both at the MEPS and the



Kabul Military High School, and consists of physical training, drill and ceremony, and classes in military customs and courtesies.

KMTC is where the transition from civilian to soldier ultimately happens. Recruits undergo 12 weeks of basic training, learning the skills necessary for all soldiers. At graduation, they recite verses from the Quran, raising their hands as they swear allegiance to their country and to the Quran. The recruits then don their new green berets as they prepare for unit collective training and duty as soldiers of the Afghan National Army.

“With the strong will and unwavering commitment of the people, the Afghan National Army will continue its growth toward 70,000 volunteers,” said Col. Aqa Mohammad Daqiq, Logar Province NAVC commander. “Together, we can build a strong, all-volunteer Army to secure the future of Afghanistan.” 



New recruits respond to their drill instructor as they wait to be fitted for boots at the Kabul Military Training Center.



The NAVC in Logar Province opened Aug. 24, 2004. There are currently 31 operational NAVCs with ongoing construction to complete four additional centers, placing one in each of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, with two in the capital of Kabul.